

TITLE

GLASS LAMINATES HAVING IMPROVED STRUCTURAL
INTEGRITY AGAINST SEVERE STRESSES FOR USE IN STOPLESS
GLAZING APPLICATIONS

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This application claims the benefit of U.S.
Provisional Application No. 60/460,156, filed
April 3, 2003.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION10 Field of the Invention

This invention relates to laminated glass
structures. This invention particularly relates to
laminated glass structures that can withstand severe
impact and/or severe pressure loads even being
15 supported in localized positions around the periphery
of the glazing element or within the body of the
glazing element.

Description of the prior art

Conventional glazing structures comprise a glazing
20 element mounted in or to a support structure such as a
frame. Such glazing elements can comprise a laminate
window, such as a glass/interlayer/glass laminate
window. There are various glazing methods known and
which are conventional for constructing windows, doors,
25 or other glazing elements for commercial and/or
residential buildings. Such glazing methods are, for
example: exterior pressure plate glazing; flush
glazing; marine glazing; removable stop glazing; and,
silicone structural glazing (also known as stopless
30 glazing).

For example, U.S. Patent No. 4,406,105 describes a
structurally glazed system whereby holes are created
through the glazing element and a plate member system
with a connection being formed through the hole.

Threat-resistant windows and glass structures are known and can be constructed utilizing conventional glazing methods. U.S. Patent No. 5,960,606 ('606) and U.S. Patent No. 4,799,376 ('376) each describes
5 laminate windows that are made to withstand severe forces. In International Publication Number WO 98/28515 (IPN '515) a glass laminate is positioned in a rigid channel in which a resilient material adjacent to the glass permits flexing movement between
10 the resilient material and the rigid channel. Other means of holding glazing panels exist such as adhesive tapes, gaskets, putty, and the like and can be used to secure panels to a frame. For example, WO 93/002269 describes the use of a stiffening member that is
15 laminated to a polymeric interlayer around the periphery of a glass laminate to stiffen the interlayer, which can extend beyond the edge of the glass/interlayer laminate. In another embodiment, '269 describes the use of a rigid member, which is inserted
20 into a channel below the surface of a monolithic transparency, and extending from the transparency.

Windows and glass structures capable of withstanding hurricane-force winds and high force impacts are not trouble-free, however. Conventional
25 glazing methods can require that the glazing element have some extra space in the frame to facilitate insertion or removal of the glazing element. While the additional space facilitates installation, it allows the glazing element to move in a swinging, rocking, or
30 rotational motion within the frame. Further, it can move from side to side (that is, in the transverse direction) in the frame depending upon the magnitude and direction of the force applied against the glazing element. Under conditions of severe repetitive impact

and/or either continuous or discontinuous pressure, a glass laminate can move within the frame or structural support in such a way that there can be sufficient stress built up to eventually fracture the window and
5 allow the laminate to be pulled out of the frame. For example, when subjected to severe hurricane force winds the flexing movement in the windows of IPN '515, wherein glass flexes within a rigid channel, can gradually pull the laminate out of the channel
10 resulting in loss of integrity of the structure. In '376, the glass held against the frame can be broken and crushed, causing a loss of structural integrity in the window/frame structure. In WO '269, inserting a stiff foreign body into the interlayer as described
15 therein can set up the structure for failure at the interface where the polymer contacts the foreign body when subjected to severe stresses.

WO 00/64670 describes glass laminates that utilize the interlayer as a structural element in glazing
20 structures thereby providing greater structural integrity to the laminate during duress or after initial fracture of the glass.

Recent events have heightened awareness of security against bomb blasts in office and residential
25 buildings. Conventional hurricane glass may not be able to withstand the force of an explosion set off within or outside of a building. Security measures can be desirable which put in place glazing units that can be resistant to the force of an explosion nearby or in
30 the proximity of a building or structure with said glazing. Further, it can be desirable to implement such security glazing without detracting from the aesthetics of the building or giving the building a fortress-like appearance.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In one aspect, the present invention is a glazing element useful for silicone structural glazing (hereinafter, stopless glazing) comprising a transparent laminate in a support structure, wherein the laminate comprises at least one attachment means for attaching the laminate to the support structure wherein: (1) the laminate comprises at least one layer of glass bonded directly to a thermoplastic polymer interlayer on at least one surface of the glass; (2) the interlayer extends beyond at least one edge of the laminate; (3) one surface of the extended portion of the interlayer is bonded to at least one surface of the attachment means; (4) another surface of the extended portion of the interlayer is bonded to the glass; (5) the attachment means is a clip useful for aligning and holding the laminate inside of a retaining channel of the support structure; (6) the clip optionally comprises at least one interlocking extension useful for restricting rotational and/or transverse movement of the laminate within the channel and/or movement of the laminate out of the channel, and wherein the glazing does not require an external pressure plate for mounting to the support structure.

In another aspect, the present invention is a glass laminate comprising a thermoplastic interlayer and at least one attachment means positioned at one or more points on the periphery of the laminate, wherein the attachment means comprises a retaining assembly that is bonded directly to a second thermoplastic polymer, and wherein the second thermoplastic polymer is (a) bonded to the interlayer at the interface where the polymer and the interlayer are in direct contact and (b) bonded to the glass at another interface where

the glass and the polymer are in direct contact, and wherein the second thermoplastic polymer can be the same material as the thermoplastic polymer interlayer or can be a different material from the thermoplastic
5 polymer interlayer.

In another aspect the present invention is a glass curtain wall utilizing stopless glazing structural design features comprising a multiplicity of glass laminate glazing units held together mechanically by
10 cables, ropes, hooks, or other mechanical means, and additionally comprises multiple retaining assembly units at one or more points along the periphery, excluding the vertices, of the vertices of the laminates, and wherein the laminates further comprise
15 corner assembly caps wherein the caps connect a plurality of the glazing units together by interlocking groups of adjacent retaining assemblies together.

In another aspect, the present invention is a glass curtain wall fabricated using a stopless glazing
20 architectural design, comprising a multiplicity of glass laminate glazing units held together mechanically by cables, ropes, hooks, or other mechanical means, and additionally comprises multiple retaining assembly units at one or more of the vertices of the laminates,
25 and wherein the wall further comprises assembly caps wherein the caps connect a plurality of the glazing units together by interlocking groups of adjacent retaining assemblies together and wherein: (1) the laminate comprises at least one layer of glass bonded
30 directly to an ethylene acid copolymer or an ionomer thereof as the interlayer on at least one surface of the glass; (2) the interlayer extends beyond at least one edge of the laminate; (3) one surface of the extended portion of the interlayer is bonded to at

least one surface of the attachment means; (4) another surface of the extended portion of the interlayer is bonded to the glass; (5) the attachment means is at least one retaining assembly positioned at one or more of the vertices of the laminate, wherein the at least one retaining assembly is bonded directly to a second thermoplastic polymer, and wherein the second thermoplastic polymer is in turn bonded to the thermoplastic polymer interlayer of the laminate at one interface and bonded to the glass at another interface, and wherein the second thermoplastic polymer is an acid copolymer or an ionomer thereof.

In another aspect the present invention is a glass laminate suitable for use in a stopless glazing architectural design comprising a transparent laminate and at least one attachment means for attaching the laminate to a support structure for the laminate wherein: (1) the laminate comprises at least one layer of glass bonded directly to a thermoplastic polymer interlayer on at least one surface of the glass; (2) the interlayer extends beyond at least one edge of the laminate; (3) one surface of the extended portion of the interlayer is bonded to at least one surface of the attachment means; (4) another surface of the extended portion of the interlayer is bonded to the glass; (5) (a) the attachment means is a clip useful for aligning and holding the laminate in a retaining channel of the support structure and, (b) the clip further comprises at least one interlocking extension useful for restricting rotational and/or transverse movement of the laminate within the retaining channel and/or movement of the laminate out of the channel.

In another aspect, the present invention is a process for attaching the interlayer of a glass

laminate to an attachment means post-lamination comprising the steps: contacting the edge of the laminate with a suitable bonding material for bonding the interlayer to the attachment means; contacting the attachment means to another surface of the bonding material such that the interlayer is indirectly contacting the attachment means, forming a pre-bonded retaining assembly; applying heat or energy to the pre-bonded assembly sufficient to cause the bonding material and the interlayer to flow together; discontinuing the application of heat and holding the assembly together with pressure until the interlayer and bonding material have each cooled below their softening point.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a conventional glass laminate in a frame.

Figure 2 is a glazing element of the present invention comprising a glass/plastic/glass laminate which comprises a thermoplastic interlayer, wherein the laminate is retained by a framing structure comprising an angled mullion and a retaining assembly which comprises a fastener and an angled two-piece asymmetrical retaining clamp, the laminate further comprising an attachment clip that is retained by the framing structure.

Figure 3 depicts a glazing element of the present invention comprising a glass/plastic/glass laminate which comprises a thermoplastic interlayer, wherein the laminate is retained by a framing structure comprising an internal retaining assembly which comprises a fastener and a retaining cap, the laminate comprising an attachment clip that is retained by the framing structure.

Figure 4 depicts a glazing element of the present invention comprising a glass/plastic/glass laminate with an attachment clip and an angled mullion comprising an external retaining assembly to hold the laminate by way of the attachment clip.

Figure 5 depicts a glass/plastic/glass laminate having four corner attachment means wherein the corner attachment means are bonded to the plastic interlayer of the laminate.

Figure 6 depicts an exploded view of the laminate and attachment means of Figure 5.

Figure 7 is a depiction of several units of the laminates of the present invention and a retaining assembly cap.

Figure 8 is an exploded view of Figure 7.

Figure 9 depicts a digital photograph of the corner unit assembly.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Figure 1 shows a conventional laminate comprising glass (1), a thermoplastic interlayer (2) and glass (3), the glass being attached to a frame (4) through an intermediary adhesive layer (5) which is typically a gasket, putty, sealant tape, or silicone sealant.

The present invention relates to glazing elements that are constructed for silicone structural glazing applications. In a conventional silicone structural glazing (stopless glazing) application, the support structure is designed to eliminate or minimize, for aesthetic reasons, the edge capture of the glazing by the frame so that the frame is not readily visible to someone viewing the window from the exterior. One result can be that an exterior pressure plate, which is used in the glazing art to capture and exert variable

pressure on a glazing unit to hold it into the support structure, can be undesirable. In many stopless glazing applications it can be desirable to eliminate the exterior pressure plate.

5 The present invention is a glass laminate system that utilizes the interlayer for the purpose of attaching the laminate to the support structure, as described in WO 00/64670, hereby incorporated by reference, in stopless glazing architectural
10 applications. In a process for producing glazing units for architectural applications that incorporate the interlayer as a structural element of the glazing, it has now been found that attaching the interlayer of a glass laminate to a support structure for the laminate
15 can provide stopless glazing units having improved strength and structural integrity against severe threats.

 In one embodiment, the glazing element of this invention comprises an attachment means that enables
20 the use of a stopless glazing design structure comprising a laminate having at least one layer of glass and at least one thermoplastic polymer interlayer that is optionally self-adhered directly to at least one surface of the glass. By self-adhered, it is meant
25 that the interlayer/glass interface does not require and therefore possibly may not include any intervening layers of adhesives and/or glass surface pre-treatment to obtain bonding suitable for use as a safety glass. In some applications it is preferable that there is no
30 intervening film or adhesive layer.

 Thermoplastic polymers useful in the practice of the present invention should have properties that allow the interlayer to provide conventional advantages to the glazing, such as transparency to light, adhesion to

glass, and other known and desirable properties of an interlayer material. In this regard, conventional interlayer materials can be suitable for use herein. Conventional interlayer materials include thermoplastic
5 polymers. Suitable polymers include, for example: polyvinylbutyrals (PVB); polyvinyl chlorides (PVC); polyurethanes (PUR); polyvinyl acetate; ethylene acid copolymers and their ionomers; polyesters; copolyesters; polyacetals; and others known in the art
10 of manufacturing glass laminates. Blended materials using any compatible combination of these materials can be suitable, as well. In addition, a suitable interlayer material for use in the practice of the present invention should be able to resist tearing away
15 from a support structure under extreme stress. A sheet of a suitable polymer for use in the practice of the present invention has a high modulus, excellent tear strength and excellent adhesion directly to glass. As such, a suitable interlayer material or material blend
20 should have a Storage Young's Modulus of at least 50 MPa at temperatures up to about 40°C. It can be useful to vary the thickness of the interlayer in order to enhance the tear strength, for example. While many conventional thermoplastic polymers can be suitable for
25 use in the practice of the present invention, preferably the polymer is an ethylene acid copolymer. More preferably the thermoplastic polymer is an ethylene acid copolymer obtained by the copolymerization of ethylene and a α,β -unsaturated
30 carboxylic acid, or derivatives thereof. Suitable derivatives of acids useful in the practice of the present invention are known to those skilled in the art, and include esters, salts, anhydrides, amides, nitriles, and the like. Acid copolymers can be fully

or partially neutralized to the salt (or partial salt). Fully or partially neutralized acid copolymers are known conventionally as ionomers. Suitable copolymers can include an optional third monomeric constituent
5 that can be an ester of an ethylenically unsaturated carboxylic acid. Suitable acid copolymers useful in the practice of the present invention can be purchased commercially from, for example, E.I. DuPont de Nemours & Company under the trade names of Surlyn® and Nucrel®,
10 for example.

In the practice of the present invention the edges of the interlayer can be attached either directly to a support structure or indirectly to the support structure by way of an attachment means. As
15 contemplated in the practice of the present invention, a support structure can be any structural element or any combination of structural elements that hold the glazing element in place on the building or support the weight of the glazing element. The support structure
20 can comprise a frame, bolt, screw, wire, cable, nail, staple, and/or any conventional means for holding or supporting a glazing element, or any combination thereof. In the present invention, "support structure" can mean the complete or total support structure, or it
25 can refer to a particular structural component or element of the complete support structure. One skilled in the art of glazing manufacture will know from the context which specific meaning to apply. Direct attachment of the interlayer, as contemplated herein,
30 means a direct attachment of the laminate to the support structure or any element thereof wherein the interlayer is in direct and consistent contact with the support structure. Direct attachment of the interlayer to the support can be from the top, sides, bottom, or

through the interlayer material. By indirect attachment it is meant any mode of attachment wherein the interlayer does not have direct contact with the support structure, but does have contact with the support structure through at least one intervening structural component of the glazing element. Indirect attachment of the interlayer to the support structure by way of an attachment means is most preferable in the practice of the present invention. The attachment means can be any means for holding or constraining the glass laminate into a frame or other support structure.

In a preferred embodiment, the attachment means is an attachment clip that can be bonded to an extended portion of the interlayer by a bonding process. In the practice of the present invention there is no direct contact intended between the clip and any portion of the glass layer(s) of the laminate, and any such contact is incidental. In any event, it can be preferred to minimize contact between the clip and the glass in order to reduce glass fracture under stress or during movement of the laminate in the support structure. To that end, the portion of the interlayer that extends from the edges of the laminate preferably forms an intervening layer between the clip and the glass layer such that the clip does not contact the glass. The surface of the clip that contacts the interlayer can be smooth, but preferably the surface of the clip has at least one projection and/or one recessed area, and more preferably several projections and/or recessed areas, which can provide additional surface area for bonding as well as a mechanical interlocking mechanism with the interlayer to enhance the effectiveness of the adhesive bonding between the clip and the interlayer, thereby providing a

laminate/clip assembly with greater structural integrity.

In another embodiment, a conventional glass laminate unit can be used to create a laminate glazing unit of the present invention. To achieve the same or similar effect as in other embodiments, the interlayer material can be bonded to the thermoplastic material without the necessity of actually extending the interlayer beyond the edges of the laminate. In this embodiment, strips of thermoplastic polymer material suitable for bonding to the thermoplastic interlayer can be positioned on the periphery of the laminate and heated to promote melting, or flow, of the interlayer and the thermoplastic polymer on the periphery of the laminate such that the two materials come into direct contact and become blended. Upon cooling below the melting point of the polymers, the two materials will be bonded to one another and thus be available to perform the bonding function between the glass and the attachment means. Other processes for bonding the interlayer to the attachment means can be contemplated and within the scope of the present invention if the interlayer is effectively extended outside the edges of the laminate by that process. The thermoplastic polymer can be the same polymer as used for the interlayer, or it can be a different material that forms a strong enough bond with the interlayer material under the process conditions used. In a preferred embodiment bonding the thermoplastic strips to the glass of the laminate and to the attachment means can be performed simultaneously.

A bonding process suitable for use in the practice of the present invention is any wherein the interlayer can be bonded to the attachment means. In the present

invention, by "bonding" it is meant that the interlayer and the attachment means form a physical, chemical, and/or mechanical bond that results in adhesion between the attachment means and the interlayer. Bonding can
5 be accomplished by physical means or by chemical means, or by a combination of both. Physical bonding, for the purposes of the present invention, is adhesion that results from interaction of the interlayer with the attachment means wherein the chemical nature of the
10 interlayer and/or the attachment means is unchanged at the surfaces where the adhesion exists. For example, adhesion that results from intermolecular forces, wherein covalent chemical bonds are neither created nor destroyed, is an example of physical bonding. Chemical
15 bonding, according to the present invention, would require forming and/or breaking covalent chemical bonds at the interface between the interlayer and the attachment means in order to produce adhesion.

The bonding process of the present invention
20 preferably comprises the step of applying heat to the clip while it is in direct contact with the interlayer, that is, applying energy to a clip/interlayer assembly such that the polymeric interlayer and the clip are bonded at the interface where the clip and interlayer
25 are in contact. Without being held to theory, it is believed that this results in a physical bonding rather than a chemical bonding. Application of heat in the bonding process can be accomplished by various methods, including the use of: a heated tool; microwave energy;
30 or ultrasound to heat the interlayer and/or the attachment clip and promote bonding. Preferably the clip/interlayer assembly can be bonded at a temperature of less than about 175°C, more preferably at a temperature of less than about 165°C. Most preferably,

the clip/interlayer assembly can be bonded at a temperature of from about 125°C to about 150°C. Once bonded, the clip/interlayer/laminate form a laminate/clip assembly that can be fitted or otherwise
5 attached to a frame or other support structure.

A clip that is suitable for use in the practice of the present invention can optionally have a mechanical interlocking extension that can, by interlocking with the support structure, reduce the motion available to
10 the laminate in the channel of a frame, or against any other rigid support structure member. The extension member of the clip can thereby reduce the force of the rigid support structure against the laminate and also assist in holding the laminate in or to the support
15 structure. The extension member can have various forms and/or shapes to accomplish its function. For example, the extension member can form part of a ball and socket; it can form a "C", an "L", or a "T" shape to hold it into the support structure, or it can be any
20 sort of extension arm such as a hook or a clamp, for example. Any design of the extension member that accomplishes the function of facilitating the laminate being held by the support structure is contemplated as within the scope of the present invention.

25 For the purposes of this invention, a laminate/clip assembly of the present invention is attached to a support structure if the assembly is nailed, screwed, bolted, glued, slotted, tied or otherwise constrained from becoming detached from the
30 structure. Preferably, a laminate/clip assembly of the present invention is geometrically and/or physically constrained within a channel formed by elements of a framing structure. In the practice of the present invention, a conventional framing structure comprises a

mullion which functions to attach and hold a glazing element to a building, for example.

A framing structure useful in the practice of the present invention comprises a retaining assembly which
5 functions to hold a glazing element in place against the mullion. An external pressure plate is a mechanical structural element of a structural support that captures and retains the edge of the glass laminate within a channel, and allows variable pressure
10 to be applied to the glass edge to prevent slippage or movement within the frame channel. In stopless glazing applications it is preferred to minimize or eliminate the external pressure plate from visual sight lines for aesthetic reasons. A retaining assembly of the present
15 invention is designed to retain a laminate of the present invention by way of the attachment means of the laminate. A retaining assembly of the present invention can be internal to the mullion or external to the mullion. A retaining assembly of the present
20 invention can be a clamp assembly, a cap assembly, or other type of assembly which provides a method of retaining a glazing element of the present invention in a framing structure, with the proviso that the retaining assembly is not readily visible to an
25 observer when the glazing element is completely assembled. A retaining assembly can additionally comprise a fastener that functions to hold the retaining assembly to the mullion.

In another embodiment, the present invention is a
30 process for assembling a glass curtain wall (hereinafter, "curtain wall") from glazing elements of the present invention. The process for building a curtain wall assembled from conventional glass laminates is known. However, a curtain wall that

utilizes laminates as described herein, wherein the interlayer is extended outside of the edges of the laminate for use in attaching the laminate to the support structure is not conventional. A curtain wall construction can require the use of a stopless glazing as described herein. Attaching the laminate to the support structure while reducing or eliminating the visual distraction of a conventional frame can present a problem in the practice of the present invention.

Minimizing the amount of frame needed to retain a glazing of the present invention can require a process whereby the interlayer is anchored, or attached, to the support structure in specific locations. In a particularly preferred embodiment, the present invention is a process comprising the step of attaching the interlayer to the support structure via attachment means placed at the vertices of the laminate. If the laminate does not have vertices, locations for the attachment means can be selected by inscribing the shape of the laminate inside of a polygon, extending the interlayer and positioning the attachment means at the selected vertices of the imaginary polygon.

Various types of retaining apparatus can be designed to capture the exposed interlayer and attach the interlayer to the support structure. For example, a retaining assembly can be constructed which captures the front and back of the laminate via the exposed interlayer, and comprises a structural element that allows for connection to other glazing units and/or to the support structure.

Alternatively, in another embodiment, the retaining apparatus can be designed so that only the front of the glazing is captured by the retaining assembly, thereby allowing more freedom of motion to

the laminate within the support structure in response to extreme stresses such as from hurricane force winds or a blast from an explosion. Such increased freedom of motion can also help reduce delamination that can
5 result from temperature fluctuation experienced by the laminate.

In one of the preferred embodiments of the present invention, depicted in Figure 2, a glazing element comprises: a glass (6) /interlayer (7) /glass (8)
10 laminate; and an attachment clip (9). The attachment clip comprises an interlocking extension (10) that is bonded to a polymeric material (11) that is suitable for bonding, and is bonded with, the interlayer (7). The glazing element is retained and supported by an
15 angled frame structure (12) that comprises an angled frame structural element (13) and an angled internal retaining clamp assembly (14) which in turn comprises an asymmetrical two-piece clamp (15) and a fastener (16). The attachment clip optionally comprises a
20 gasket (17) that cushions the attachment clip (9) against the frame. Sealant (18) can be used to caulk the channel formed by the glazing elements.

In another embodiment depicted in Figure 3, a glazing element comprises: a glass (19) /interlayer
25 (20) /glass (21) laminate; and an attachment clip (22). The attachment clip comprises an interlocking extension (23) that is bonded to a polymeric material (24) that is suitable for bonding, and is bonded with, the interlayer (20). The glazing element is retained and
30 supported by an angled frame structure (25) that comprises a frame structural element (26) and an internal retaining cap assembly (27) which in turn comprises a cap (28) and a fastener (29). The attachment clip optionally comprises a gasket (30) that

cushions the attachment clip (22) against the frame. Sealant (31) can be used to caulk the channel formed by the glazing elements.

In another of the preferred embodiments, depicted
5 in Figure 4, a glazing element of the present invention is held to a support structure (32) by an external retaining assembly (33) that is fastened to the external surface of an angled mullion (34). The retaining assembly has an open channel (35) into which
10 the glazing element can be fitted and held.

In still another embodiment, the present invention can comprise a corner retaining assembly (36) as depicted in Figure 5. The corner assembly comprises at least one posterior piece (37) that is optional and, if
15 present, is positioned behind the laminate in at least one corner of the laminate, and at least one anterior piece (38) that is positioned at the front of the laminate in one or more of the corners of the laminate, but at least in each corner as the posterior piece, as
20 depicted in Figure 6. Positioned between the posterior piece and the posterior glass surface, and between the anterior piece and the anterior glass surface are strips of polymeric material (39, 40). In a preferred embodiment, the polymeric material is the same material
25 that is used for the interlayer material. The posterior and anterior pieces function together to capture the laminate and bond the laminate through the thermoplastic interlayer. The posterior and anterior pieces are designed to fit together using any means of
30 connecting the pieces together.

In a particularly preferred embodiment, the corners of the laminate are blunted so as to have a flattened surface where the corner assembly pieces are to be attached, as shown in Figure 6. A third strip of

polymeric material (41) is used as an intervening layer between the edge of the laminate and the corner assembly. The third strip of polymer material is preferably the same as the other strips of polymer.

5 The polymer strips and the corner assembly are bonded together and to the laminate in the manner described hereinabove. In any of the pieces of the assembly, the surface that contacts the polymer can optionally have irregularities, and/or grooves, and/or projections,
10 and/or recesses, and/or any such surface enhancement that can provide increased surface area and/or mechanical interlocking with the polymer to provide an enhanced level of adhesion between the assembly and the polymer.

15 Any number of laminates can be constructed in such a fashion as to form a wall of laminates. In still another embodiment of the present invention, a corner assembly cap (42) can be provided to cap four corners of four separate laminate units, as depicted in Figure
20 7. The corner assembly cap comprises the corner cap (43) and a fastener (44). The corner assembly cap can help to provide stability to the separate laminate units in a wall constructed from glass laminates.

Figure 8 depicts an exploded view of the four-piece laminate unit depicted in Figure 7.

Figure 9 depicts a drawing of a corner assembly (36) that has been bonded to a glass laminate using a thermoplastic polymer material that is also used as the interlayer material.

30 A laminate of the present invention has excellent durability, impact resistance, toughness, and resistance by the interlayer to cuts inflicted by glass once the glass is shattered. A laminate of the present invention is particularly useful in architectural

applications in buildings subjected to hurricanes and windstorms, or structures in which it is desirable to protect against the full force of a high-pressure shock wave generated by, for example, an explosion. A

5 laminate of the present invention that is attached or mounted in a frame by way of the interlayer is more resistant to being torn from the frame after such stress or attack. A laminate of the present invention also has a low haze and excellent transparency. These
10 properties make glazing elements of the present invention useful as architectural glass, and can include components that are useful for: reduction of solar rays, sound control, safety, and security, for example.

15 In a preferred embodiment, the interlayer is positioned between the glass plates such that the interlayer is exposed in such a manner that it can be attached to the surrounding support structure. The interlayer can be attached to the support structure in
20 a continuous manner along the perimeter of the laminate. Alternatively, the interlayer can be attached to the structural support in a discontinuous manner at various points around the perimeter of the laminate. Any manner of attaching the laminate to the
25 frame by way of the interlayer is considered to be within the scope of the present invention. For example, the frame surrounding the laminate can contain interlayer material that can bond with the laminate and also with the frame; the laminate can be mechanically
30 anchored to the frame with a screw, hook, nail, or clamp, for example. Mechanical attachment includes any physical constraint of the laminate by slotting, fitting, or molding a support to hold the interlayer in place within the structural support.

The interlayer can be bonded, or adhered, to the glass plates by conventional means, including applying heat and pressure to the structure. In a preferred embodiment, the interlayer can be bonded without
5 applying increased pressure to the structure.

One preferred laminate of this invention is a transparent laminate comprising two layers of glass and an intermediate thermoplastic polymer interlayer self-adhered to at least one of the glass surfaces. The
10 interlayer preferably has a Storage Young's Modulus of 50-1,000 MPa (mega Pascals) at 0.3 Hz and 25°C, and preferably from about 100 to about 500 MPa, as determined according to ASTM D 5026-95a. The interlayer should remain in the 50 - 1,000 MPa range of
15 its Storage Young's Modulus at temperatures up to 40°C.

The laminate can be prepared according to conventional processes known in the art. For example, in a typical process, the interlayer is placed between two pieces of annealed float glass of dimension 12"x
20 12" (305 mm x 305 mm) and 2.5 mm nominal thickness, which have been washed and rinsed in demineralized water. The glass/interlayer/glass assembly is then heated in an oven set at 90-100°C for 30 minutes. Thereafter, it is passed through a set of nip rolls
25 (roll pressing) so that most of the air in the void spaces between the glass and the interlayer may be squeezed out, and the edge of the assembly sealed. The assembly at this stage is called a pre-press. The pre-press is then placed in an air autoclave where the
30 temperature is raised to 135°C and the pressure raised to 200 psig (14.3 bar). These conditions are maintained for 20 minutes, after which, the air is cooled while no more air is added to the autoclave. After 20 minutes of cooling when the air temperature in

the autoclave is less than 50°C, the excess air pressure is vented. Obvious variants of this process will be known to those of ordinary skill in the art of glass lamination, and these obvious variants are
5 contemplated as suitable for use in the practice of the present invention.

Preferably, the interlayer of the laminate is a sheet of an ionomer resin, wherein the ionomer resin is a water insoluble salt of a polymer of ethylene and
10 methacrylic acid or acrylic acid, containing about 14-24% by weight of the acid and about 76-86% by weight of ethylene. The ionomer further characterized by having about 10-80% of the acid neutralized with a metallic ion, preferably a sodium ion, and the ionomer
15 has a melt index of about 0.5-50. Melt index is determined at 190°C according to ASTM D1238. The preparation of ionomer resins is disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 3,404,134. Known methods can be used to obtain an ionomer resin with suitable optical
20 properties. However, current commercially available acid copolymers do not have an acid content of greater than about 20%. If the behavior of currently available acid copolymer and ionomer resins can predict the behavior of resins having higher acid content, then
25 high acid resins should be suitable for use herein.

Haze and transparency of laminates of this invention are measured according to ASTM D-1003-61 using a Hazeguard XL211 hazemeter or Hazeguard Plus Hazemeter (BYK Gardner-USA). Percent haze is the
30 diffusive light transmission as a percent of the total light transmission. To be considered suitable for architectural and transportation uses. The interlayer of the laminates generally is required to have a

transparency of at least 90% and a haze of less than 5%.

In the practice of the present invention, use of a primer or adhesive layer can be optional. Elimination
5 of the use of a primer can remove a process step and reduce the cost of the process, which can be preferred.

Standard techniques can be used to form the resin interlayer sheet. For example, compression molding, injection molding, extrusion and/or calendaring can be
10 used. Preferably, conventional extrusion techniques are used. In a typical process, an ionomer resin suitable for use in the present invention can include recycled ionomer resin as well as virgin (never used) ionomer resin. Additives such as colorants,
15 antioxidants and UV stabilizers can be charged into a conventional extruder and melt blended and passed through a cartridge type melt filter for contamination removal. The melt can be extruded through a die and pulled through calendar rolls to form sheet about
20 0.38-4.6 mm thick. Typical colorants that can be used in the ionomer resin sheet are, for example, a bluing agent to reduce yellowing or a whitening agent or a colorant can be added to color the glass or to control solar light.

25 The polymer sheet after extrusion can have a smooth surface but preferably has a roughened surface to effectively allow most of the air to be removed from between the surfaces in the laminate during the lamination process. This can be accomplished for
30 example, by mechanically embossing the sheet after extrusion or by melt fracture during extrusion of the sheet and the like. Air can be removed from between the layers of the laminate by any conventional method

such as nip roll pressing, vacuum bagging, or autoclaving the pre-laminate structure.

The Figures do not represent all variations thought to be within the scope of the present invention. One of ordinary skill in the art of glazing manufacture would know how to incorporate the teachings of the present invention into the conventional art without departing from the scope of the inventions described herein. Any variation of glass/interlayer/glass laminate assembly wherein a frame can be attached to the interlayer - either directly or indirectly through an intermediary layer, for example an adhesive layer, is believed to be within the scope of the present invention.

For architectural uses a laminate can have two layers of glass and an interlayer of a thermoplastic polymer. Multilayer interlayers are conventional and, can be suitable for use herein, provided that at least one of the layers can be attached to the support structure as described herein. A laminate of the present invention can have an overall thickness of about 3-30 mm. The interlayer can have a thickness of about 0.38-4.6 mm and each glass layer can be at least 1 mm thick. In a preferred embodiment, the interlayer is self-adhered directly to the glass, that is, an intermediate adhesive layer or coating between the glass and the interlayer is not used. Other laminate constructions can be used such as, for example, multiple layers of glass and thermoplastic interlayers; or a single layer of glass with a thermoplastic polymer interlayer, having adhered to the interlayer a layer of a durable transparent plastic film. Any of the above laminates can be coated with conventional abrasion resistant coatings that are known in the art.

The frame and/or the attachment means can be fabricated from a variety of materials such as, for example: wood; metals, such as aluminum or steel; and various strong plastic materials including polyvinyl chloride and nylon. Depending on the material used and the type of installation, the frame may or may not be required to overlay the laminate in order to obtain a fairly rigid adhesive bond between the frame and the laminate interlayer.

The structural support can be selected from available designs in the glazing art that are useful for stopless glazing systems. The laminate can be attached, or secured, to the frame with or without use of an adhesive material. It has been found that an interlayer made from ionomer resin self-adheres securely to most frame materials, such as wood, steel, aluminum and plastics. In some applications it may be desirable to use additional fasteners such as screws, bolts, and clamps along the edge of the frame. Any means of anchoring the attachment means to the frame is suitable for use in the present invention.

In preparing the glazing elements of this invention, autoclaving can be optional. Steps well known in the art such as: roll pressing; vacuum ring or bag pre-pressing; or vacuum ring or bagging; can be used to prepare the laminates of the present invention. In any case, the component layers are brought into intimate contact and processed into a final laminate, which is free of bubbles and has good optics and adequate properties to insure laminate performance over the service life of the application. In these processes the objective is to squeeze out or force out a large portion of the air from between the glass and plastic layer(s). In one embodiment the frame can

serve as a vacuum ring. The application of external pressure, in addition to driving out air, brings the glass and plastic layers into direct contact and adhesion develops.

5 For architectural uses in coastal areas, the laminate of glass/interlayer/glass must pass a simulated hurricane impact and cycling test which measures resistance of a laminate to debris impact and wind pressure cycling. A currently acceptable test is
10 performed in accordance to the South Florida Building Code Chapter 23, section 2315 Impact tests for wind born debris. Fatigue load testing is determined according to Table 23-F of section 2314.5, dated 1994. This test simulates the forces of the wind plus air
15 born debris impacts during severe weather, e.g., a hurricane. A sample 35 inches x 50 inches (88.9 x 127 cm) of the laminate is tested. The test consists of two impacts on the laminate (one in the center of the laminate sample followed by a second impact in a
20 corner of the laminate). The impacts are done by launching a 9-pound (4.1 kilograms) board nominally 2 inches (5 cm) by 4 inches (10 cm) and 8 feet (2.43 meters) long at 50 feet/second (15.2 meters/second) from an air pressure cannon. If
25 the laminate survives the above impact sequence, it is subjected to an air pressure cycling test. In this test, the laminate is securely fastened to a chamber. In the positive pressure test, the laminate with the impact side outward is fastened to the chamber and a
30 vacuum is applied to the chamber and then varied to correspond with the cycling sequences set forth in Table 1. The pressure cycling schedule, shown in Table 1, is specified as a fraction of the maximum pressure (P). In this test P equals 70 PSF (pounds per

square foot), or 3360 Pascals. Each cycle of the first 3500 cycles and subsequent cycles is completed in about 1-3 seconds. On completion of the positive pressure test sequence, the laminate is reversed with the impact side facing inward to the chamber for the negative pressure portion of the test and a vacuum is applied corresponding to the following cycling sequence. The values are expressed as negative values (-).

10

TABLE 1		
Number of Air Pressure Cycles	Pressure Schedule*	Pressure Range [pounds per square foot (Pascals)]
Positive Pressure (inward acting)		
3,500	0.2 P to 0.5 P	14 to 35 (672-1680 Pascals)
300	0.0 P to 0.6 P	0 to 42 (0-2016 Pascals)
600	0.5 P to 0.8 P	35 to 56 (1680-2688 Pascals)
100	0.3 P to 1.0 P	21 to 70 (1008-3360 Pascals)
Negative Pressure (outward acting)		
50	-0.3 P to -1.0 P	-21 to -70 (-1008 to -3360 Pascals)
1,060	-0.5 P to -0.8 P	-35 to -56 (-1680 to -2688 Pascals)
50	0.0 P to -0.6 P	-0 to -42 (0 to -2016 Pascals)
3,350	-0.2 P to -0.5 P	-14 to -35 (-672 to -1680 Pascals)

*Absolute pressure level where P is 70 pounds per square foot (3360 Pascals).

A laminate passes the impact and cycling test when there are no tears or openings over 5 inches (12.7 cm) in length and not greater than 1/16 inch (0.16 cm) in width.

15

Other applications may require additional testing

to determine whether the glazing is suitable for that particular application. A glazing membrane and corresponding support structure can fail by one of three failure modes:

- 5 1. The glazing membrane breaches (a tear or hole develops) as a result of a force being applied to the glazing or surrounding structure.
2. The glazing membrane pulls away or from the support structure losing mechanical integrity such that the
10 glazing membrane no longer provides the intended function, generally a barrier.
3. The support structure fails by loss of integrity within its makeup or loss of integrity between the support structure and the surrounding structure
15 occurs.

Only failure modes 1 and/or 2 defined above are the subject of the present invention.

The best-optimized system is defined herein as one where no failure occurs in any component/subcomponent
20 of the glazing system when the maximum expected 'threat' is applied to the glazing system. When some threshold is exceeded, the ideal failure mode is one where a balance is achieved between failure modes 1 and 2 above. If the glazing membrane itself can withstand
25 substantially more applied force or energy than the support structure has capability to retain the glazing, then the glazing 'infill' is over-designed or the glazing support structure is under-designed. The converse is also true.

30 EXAMPLES

The Examples are for illustrative purposes only, and are not intended to limit the scope of the invention.

Examples 1 through 3 and Comparative Examples C1
35 through C3.

Conventional glass laminates were prepared by the following method. Two sheets of annealed glass having the dimensions of 300 mm x 300 mm (12 inches square) were washed with de-ionized water and dried. A sheet
5 (2.3 mm thick) of ionomer resin composed of 81% ethylene, 19% methacrylic acid, with 37% of the acid neutralized and having sodium ion as the counter-ion, and having a melt index of 2 was placed between two pieces of glass. A nylon vacuum bag was placed around
10 the pre laminate assembly to allow substantial removal of air from within (air pressure inside the bag was reduced to below 100 millibar absolute). The bagged pre laminate was heated in a convection air oven to 120°C and held for 30 minutes. A cooling fan was used
15 to cool the laminate to ambient temperature and the laminate was disconnected from the vacuum source and the bag removed yielding a fully bonded laminate of glass and interlayer.

Laminates of the present invention were prepared
20 in the same manner as above with the following exception. In some of the examples a triangular-shaped 'corner-box' retaining assembly as depicted in Figures 6 and 9 of the present application, having a wall thickness of 0.2 mm and dimensions of 50 mm x 50 mm x
25 71 mm (inside opening of 10 mm) was placed on each corner of the laminate after fitting pieces of ionomer sheet (2.3 mm thickness) within the inside of the box thereby 'lining' the inside. The assembly was placed into the vacuum bag and the process above was carried
30 out to directly 'bond' the attachment to the interlayer. To better insure that the laminates were free of void areas, that is entrained bubbles, areas of non-contact between the ionomer and glass surface and that good flow and contact was made between the ionomer
35 and the inside of the 'corner-box' all laminates were then placed in an air autoclave for further processing.

The pressure and temperature inside the autoclave was increased from ambient to 135°C and 200 psi in a period of 15 minutes. This temperature and pressure was held for 30 minutes and then the temperature was decreased
5 to 40°C within a 20-minute period whereby the pressure was lowered to ambient atmospheric pressure and the unit was removed.

A test apparatus similar to that described in SAE Recommended Practice J-2568 (attached as Appendix) was
10 assembled to measure the degree of membrane integrity. The apparatus consisted of a hydraulic cylinder with integral load cell driving a hemispherical metal ram (200 mm diameter) into the center of each glazing sample in a perpendicular manner, measuring the
15 force/deflection characteristics. Deflection was measured with a string-potentiometer attached to the ram. The glazing sample was supported either by a metal frame capturing the sample around the periphery, only at the corners or any configuration where
20 performance information is desired. The data acquisition was done via an interface to a computer system with the appropriate calibration factors. Further treatment of the data was then possible to calculate the Maximum Applied Force (F_{max}) in Newtons
25 (N), and the deflection. Integration of the data enabled the derivation the total energy expended in reaching a failure point of the glazing or supporting conditions. Testing of the laminates was done after fracturing the laminate in order to more accurately
30 measure the load-bearing capability of the interlayer attachment system.

Example C1 was an annealed glass plate (10 mm) that was stressed until fracture. The test glazing had a standard installation with all four sides captured by
35 the frame using a typical amount of edge capture (that

is, overlap of the frame and glass), and lined with an elastomeric gasket.

Example C2 was a 90-mil polyvinylbutyral (PVB) laminate that was prefabricated. The laminate
5 construction was a typical patch plate design.

Example C3 was a 90-mil SentryGlas® Plus (SGP) laminate that was prefabricated and constructed with a typical patch plate design.

Example 1 was a laminate of the present invention,
10 using a 90-mil SentryGlas® Plus interlayer that was prefabricated and constructed with a full perimeter attachment design (that is, the interlayer was attached to the frame around the full perimeter of the laminate).

15 Example 2 was the same as Example 1, except that it was constructed with a corner attachment design.

Example 3 was the same as Example 2, except that a 180-mil SentryGlas® Plus laminate that was used.

To measure the relative performance of a glazing
20 membrane capacity against an applied force/energy and the capability for the glazing support structure (or means) to retain the glazing the following testing was performed. The displacement (D), which is defined as the distance traveled by the ram from engaging the
25 laminate to the point of laminate failure, was measured. The membrane strength to integrity (S/R) ratio was measured. The S/R ratio is defined as the ratio of the applied energy required to cause a failure in a given laminate over the applied energy required to
30 break C1. The performance benefit (B) over the traditional patch plate design was calculated by dividing the applied energy required for failure in the laminate by the applied energy required to for failure in C3. The resulting data is supplied in Table 2.

Table 2

Ex	D (mm)	F _{max} (N)	S/R	B
C1	9	5284	1	.02
C2	122	108	22	.5
C3	65	939	45	1
1	80	11595	408	9.1
2	80	7243	274	6.1
3	90	9003	452	10.0

Examples 4 through 10 and Comparative Example C4

- 5 Laminates were prepared using 9/16" thick laminated glass incorporating 0.090" thick SentryGlas® Plus, available from E.I DuPont de Nemours and Company (DuPont) and 1/4" heat strengthened glass. In all but one respect this is a common glazing alternative used
- 10 in commercial glazing applications for large missile impact resistance. The improvement over the existing industry standards is the attachment means used, that is, bonding of aluminum profiles to the laminated glass' interlayer edge with a contact-heating device.
- 15 The aluminum profile was a "u" channel shape with a leg extending from the base of the "u" engaging an interlocking profile design in a custom extruded pressure plate. The 12" long aluminum profiles were positioned around the glass edge in strategic locations
- 20 to determine the most optimal location for load transfer within the glazed system. The attachment means geometry used for design validation was purposely designed to minimally impact the framing system into which it was installed. Because of this, the
- 25 structural performance on inward acting air pressure cyclical loads behaved differently within the system than outward acting air pressure loads. This allowed for validation that the design of the attachment means

of the present invention did indeed provide a substantial improvement over conventionally dry glazed systems.

Eight different individual test specimens were subjected to the test procedures required for large missile impact resistance with the location of the attachment means of the present invention varying with each test specimen. Example C4 was tested without any attachments of the present invention to define a baseline performance standard for a dry-glazed application with $\frac{1}{2}$ " glass bite. Each test specimen was 63" wide x 120" high and was mounted in a steel test frame to simulate a punched opening installation in a building.

All of the tested specimens passed the required impact resistance with a 2" x 4" wooden missile weighing 9# and traveling at 50 feet/second. The results of the cycling test for the various test specimens are shown in Table 3. Pressure cycling was conducted according to the Pressure Schedule shown in Table 1. A laminate of the present invention is given a passing mark for (+) load if the laminate holds in the support structure at 4500 cycles in the positive load direction and a passing mark in the (-) load direction at 4500 cycles in the negative load direction. The test laminates (with the exception of the comparative example) were designed so that the attachment means of the present invention was only engaged in the (+) load direction, and retention under negative load would be nearly identical to conventional laminates.

The units that failed in the negative load direction demonstrated precisely how much of an improvement the attachment means provided the installation. Given that without the attachment means, the limitation for a framing of this type, dry-glazed,

- with 1/2" glass bite is about a 50 PSF design pressure differential. Through testing at least a doubling of the effective design pressure differential to 100 PSF was demonstrated. It is contemplated that higher-
- 5 pressure loads would have been obtainable had the interior extruded aluminum profiles been designed to accept the attachment clips as well.

Table 3

Ex	Pressure	Results	Cycles (no.)
C4	+/- 50 PSF	Passed +/- loads	9000
4	+/- 100 PSF	Failed + load	4424
5	+/- 100 PSF	Failed + load	3800
6	+/- 100 PSF	Failed + load	4416
7	+/- 100 PSF	Passed + load	4509
8	+/- 100 PSF	Passed + load	4502
9	+/- 100 PSF	Failed + load	4409
10	+/- 100 PSF	Passed + load	4500

10 Example 11

- The curtain wall framing design can be made up of tubular extruded aluminum profile main members that are approximately 6" deep and 2-1/2" wide when viewing its cross section. The wall thickness of the profile can
- 15 be approximately 0.100" thick. The profile shape shall be designed to allow for the glass to be held in place toward the exterior of the system and can have an extruded element to allow for the exterior pressure plate, a solid extruded aluminum profile, to be
- 20 mechanically fastened to the main members via self-drilling fasteners spaced every 9" along the length of the shapes. This particular system is normally sold in lineal stock lengths that are then cut to size and fabricated at the job site. When the system is
- 25 installed onto a building the fabricated framing members are positioned to provide rectangular openings into which flat panels of glass is installed. Once the

glass is positioned in the framing, an exterior pressure plate is installed capturing the glass edge about ½" continuously around the perimeter of the glazed opening. In between the glass panel and the
5 aluminum framing system are elastomeric profiles that provide an air and water seal between the glass and the framing as well as provides cushioning to prevent damage to the glass when subjected to structural loads during the life of the installation.

10